

How to Share Your Testimony - Part 1 - Acts 22:1-3 – September 13th, 2009

- By way of introduction to our text, I think it is incumbent upon me to sort of set the scene so we can understand what's happening here.
- Upon the Apostle Paul's arrival in Jerusalem, he is greeted with all kinds of problems and troubles from the Jews who really hated him.
- No sooner had he entered the temple when the entire city was in an uproar. A riot starts because of a rumor that had spread about him.
- It's at this point that Paul is taken into a protective custody, and on his way into the Antonia Fortress, he asks to speak to the crowd.
- The Antonia Fortress was built by Herod the Great. After his death the Romans maintained a garrison there to monitor temple activities.
- Paul, who's now on the steps of this fortress, will speak to what is virtually the entire city of Jerusalem. Surely, he will preach the gospel.
- Well, yes and no. Paul will preach the gospel, but the way he does it is by actually packaging the gospel in the sharing of his testimony.
- This is part one of a series titled; "How to Share Your Testimony." Paul is going to rise from the scriptures and teach us how it's done.

1. Be prepared (Verse 1)

1 "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."

- v1 Paul starts by telling them to listen to his "defense." The Greek word for defense is "apologia," where we get our word "apologetics."
- This doesn't mean Paul was apologizing, nor does it mean that he is defending himself; rather he's presenting a defense of the gospel.
- In other words, he's defending the faith by giving a reason and rationale for why he believed what he believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

Philippians 1:15-18 15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 **The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.** NIV

- It's interesting that he begins his defense of the gospel the same way that Stephen did back in chapter seven, before Paul was saved.

Acts 7:2a To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! NIV

- One has to wonder if Paul hadn't already been prepared in anticipation of this grand opportunity to address an audience of this size.
- I believe Paul already had his defense in his hip pocket so to speak. He was ready because he knew what awaited him in Jerusalem.

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and **be ready always to give an answer to every man** that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: KJV

- It's been said that; "It is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret." Paul was ready; he looked ahead and prepared.
- Some might argue that when it comes to sharing their testimony, they just go with the flow and trust that God will give them the words.
- I believe that is true however, we need to be prepared for that which God may have prepared for us, namely, an opportunity to share.

Proverbs 21:31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD. NIV

Proverbs 22:17-18 17 Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, 18 for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. NIV

2. Speak their language (Verse 2)

2 When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said:

- v2 Paul speaks to them in Aramaic which was in the Hebrew tongue, and the crowd went from starting a riot, to becoming very quiet.
- Paul could've spoke Greek and doubtless that would have been very impressive but he wouldn't have spoke the language of their heart.
- I believe it is for this reason that this rioting crowd became very quiet and listened. The Apostle was speaking in a way they understood.
- Whenever Paul spoke he either made people glad, sad, or mad, but at least they knew and understood what he was saying to them.
- When sharing our testimony, I think we do err when we use certain Christian words. People simply don't understand what we're saying.

Proverbs 1:1-2 1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: 2 **for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight;** NIV

Proverbs 22:20-21 20 Have I not written thirty sayings for you, sayings of counsel and knowledge, 21 **teaching you true and reliable words, so that you can give sound answers to him who sent you?** NIV

A man bought a donkey from a preacher. The preacher told the man that this donkey had been trained in a very unique way, (being the donkey of a preacher). The only way to make the donkey go, was to say, "Hallelujah!" The only way to make the donkey stop, was to say, "Amen!" The man was pleased with his purchase and immediately got on the animal to try out the preacher's instructions. "Hallelujah!" shouted the man. The donkey began to trot. "Amen!" shouted the man. The donkey stopped immediately. "This is great!" said the man. With a "Hallelujah," he rode off very proud of his new purchase. The man traveled for a long time through some mountains. Soon he was heading toward a cliff. He could not remember the word to make the donkey stop. "Stop," said the man. "Halt!" he cried. The donkey just kept going. "Oh, no... Bible!...Church!...Please Stop!!" shouted the man. The donkey just began to trot faster. He was getting closer and closer to the cliff edge. Finally, in desperation, the man said a prayer. "Please, dear Lord. Please make this donkey stop before I go off the end of this mountain, In Jesus name, AMEN." The donkey came to an abrupt stop just one step from the edge of the cliff. ---- "HALLELUJAH!", shouted the man.

- **The moral of the story; "Be careful and prayerful with the words you choose to use so you can be understood."**

3. Find common ground (Verse 3a)

3a "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city.

- v3a Paul purposely informs them that he is a Jew and that he was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but that he was brought up in Jerusalem.
- Paul being born in Tarsus made him a Hellenist Jew, and for him being brought up in Jerusalem gave him his Hebrew background.
- In other words, Paul could have something in common with, and can relate to, the Greek, or Hellenist Jews, and the Hebrews as well.

- He does this because he wants them to know that he is one of them. Paul is establishing a common ground from which to work from.
- Paul knows his most powerful defense is his testimony. They can argue with his theology and his typology, but not with his testimony.